Gray & Associates Helps The Port of Houston Sail Through Its Reporting Cycle

Client
The Port of Houston Authority of Harris County, TX

Industry
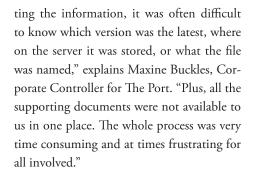Maritime

Location
Houston, Texas

Number of Locations
3

Number of Employees
600

System
CaseWare Government Reporting

Implementation By
Gray & Associates, CPAs

The Port of Houston Authority (The Port) lies along the 52-mile-long Houston Ship Channel. It is the busiest port in the United States in terms of foreign tonnage, and houses the world's second largest petro-chemical complex. The Port is an economic engine that produces jobs and economic prosperity for the local and state economy. The Port employs nearly 600 people and is responsible for an operating budget of over

$200 million. Financial stewardship and efficiency are vital components of The Port's mission. Helping it to achieve its mission are Gray & Associates, CPAs and CaseWare Government Reporting.

A Time-Consuming Process

For years, The Port produced its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) in a painstaking fashion, accumulating spreadsheets and text documents and incorporating the input of many individuals. This manual approach presented a number of difficulties. "With so many of us accessing and input-

ting the information, it was often difficult to know which version was the latest, where on the server it was stored, or what the file was named," explains Maxine Buckles, Corporate Controller for The Port. "Plus, all the supporting documents were not available to us in one place. The whole process was very time consuming and at times frustrating for all involved."

Another obstacle to the final production of the CAFR were post-audit adjustments. "We would make a change to our spreadsheet and then had to ensure that all the interrelated schedules and footnotes were updated as well. It was an onerous process. Simple adjustments could take many hours to complete and verify."

Partner For Success

The Port researched available software solutions, and ultimately selected CaseWare. Knowing that it wanted professional support and guidance during the implementation, The Port engaged Gray & Associates, CaseWare Certified Trainers and Consultants.

Gray & Associates' skilled team includes programmers, accountants, and financial reporting experts. The firm's principal was a government auditor for years, and participated in the design of the CaseWare GASB template. That level of experience and expertise appealed to The Port. "Gray & Associates made all the difference," says Buckles. "We could not have done this without them. Not only do they have significant and relevant

About Gray & Associates CPAs

Gray & Associates CPAs, an Accountancy Corporation, has been providing government entities with CaseWare solutions and support since 2001. The firm's skilled team of accountants, governmental auditors, and programmers bring a highly professional, methodical, and strategic approach to implementation and training, ensuring lasting success for its clients.

President Gail A. Gray, CPA has been an accountant since 1993, starting her career as a staff accountant auditing the City of Lawton, OK and later working as a Senior Auditor and Audit Manager on many governmental audits. In the field of government finance, her background, training, and experience are extensive. Her knowledge was even tapped by CaseWare during the development the GASB template now used by many organizations. Mrs. Gray has been a Certified CaseWare Trainer for 12 years and is a member of the GFOA.

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knowledge about governmental accounting, but they are product experts with a professional and methodical approach to project management."

Implementation Strategy

Gray & Associates' implementation methodology is unique in the industry. The company charges a fixed-fee that covers all of their services, including the build out of the last published CAFR report and assistance developing subsequent years' reports. Even the inevitable changes and adjustments that occur during a software implementation are included as part of the contract. This no-risk approach ensures clients like The Port are able to accurately budget their CaseWare implementation costs.

The Port has high praise for the implementation from Gray & Associates. "They have perfected their methodology," says Buckles. "Ours is a large and complex installation, yet Gray & Associates handled it efficiently. They built all of the tables and the notes were prebuilt. Going forward we just need to update them. They even set up the table of contents for us, properly formatted and automatically updated."

Gray & Associates' experience with a wide variety of governmental accounting systems gives them an edge during the initial data transfers. "They continually made best practice recommendations and suggestions that sped the process of bringing our data over," says Buckles. "They really felt like part of our team, working with and for us."

Solid Support

While most of the implementation was accomplished remotely, the Gray & Associates' team came on site at The Port's offices for two full days of training. "They worked with us until our CAFR was complete and published and are working with us to ensure that next year's reporting structure is in place and ready for use," Buckles says.

As part of the implementation contract, Gray & Associates offers unlimited technical support with a rapid response time. "Gray & Associates' staff was always available to us – by phone or through a GoTo-Meeting session," Buckles says. "Our questions and concerns were addressed quickly and professionally every time. Even when unexpected technical glitches occurred, Gray & Associates worked with CaseWare and us to satisfactorily resolve the issue."

A Successful Project

The Port of Houston is pleased with its new financial reporting solution and with its partnership with Gray & Associates. "CaseWare takes away many of the clerical and administrative chores involved in producing our CAFR, which leaves us all more time to focus on the accuracy, completeness, and impact of the numbers," concludes Buckles. "Our partnership with Gray & Associates was a smart decision. Their service was a major factor in the success of this project."

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